/197 cont./

685 groups left destitute by the application of the law governing theft join others, impoverished by the summer /droughts/ for example, and form the social part of the community which is easily forced into bond service by the stronger groups. (Cf. Chap. Slavery and Bond Service.)

• 203 691 Informer. In La Guajira the informer acquires the character of an institution which helps to maintain the regimen for social stability in /198/ the peninsula. This individual -- man or woman -- busies himself bringing to members of any family group news of an infraction of any legal precept which affects them and which has not been done in their presence. For instance, if the name of a dead man was spoken, if a joke was made about him, if someone stepped on his grave, etc., the informer carries the news to the interested parties, so that when the indemnity is paid for the aggressive act, he as informer will get his share. When two family groups find themselves enemies through the violation by one of the sides of some section of the regimen for social stability, they are very careful not to comment about the case in front of outsiders, because the news, misrepresented, may be taken to the opposite side, obstructing at times the legal work of the arbitrator and causing an open struggle between the two sides. The informer wants to have the right to a part when the distribution of the indemnity is carried out.

Where the action of the informer is most noticeable is in the case of a constant struggle among various co-wives. He takes advantage of this situation of mutual rancor, bringing and taking news of the movements of their husband from one to the other, etc., to obtain a remuneration for his services.

The informer defends his position, participating directly but without getting himself involved in the legal infraction against the family group to whom he reports. Later he justifies his right to receive indemnity by asserting that he too has suffered pain, has shed tears for example, when the offense has led to the death of a person, and he served as a mourner during the ceremony which followed the death.